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THE MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

Ernie R. Bailey, Ph.D.

Although Murray State University traces its history back to 1922, it was not until recently that a formal archives program for the institution was established. For many years, university records were merely boxed and stored in various locations across the campus. Through the efforts and foresight of some early presidents, two long-time secretaries and a few librarians, the university is in possession of many valuable records which might otherwise have been lost forever.

Historians throughout the region will be forever indebted to Mr. Charles F. Hinds who came to Murray as head librarian in 1967. With a history background, Mr. Hinds was keenly interested in collecting, organizing, preserving and servicing historical materials dealing with the region served by Murray State. It was in the late 1960s that he organized the Special Collections Division of the library and by the time that he left Murray for Frankfort in 1973, the basic organization had been set in motion.

Dr. Keith Heim came to Murray in 1974 as head of the Special Collections Division. With his coming, the staff began to collect material on the history of the institution. For the next decade, the Special Collections staff collected material which would eventually become the nucleus of the University Archives. Large amounts of material were stored in various parts of the library building, but no formal archives program was attempted until the coming of Dr. Coy Harmon as Dean of Libraries.

Seeing the acute need for an institutional archives, Dr. Harmon made the initial steps toward organizing such a program by assigning one professional librarian to half time archival duty during the 1985-1986 academic year. With the beginning of the 1986-1987 academic year, this professional librarian was assigned to the project on a full-time basis - the first such instance in the history of Murray State.

Miss Alice Keys and Miss Tennie Breckenridge were long-time secretaries to the Board of Regents and to the various presidents at Murray State. Both women were meticulous in preserving the files entrusted to them. They were attentive to detail, were thorough in organization and filing and were alert to the historical significance of the material that passed through their hands. Murray State University Archives will ever owe a debt of gratitude to these two most remarkable women. Miss Breckenridge died in 1955 and Miss Keys in 1962.

While housed in the same building, Special Collections and Archives are

treated as separate entities. The Archives collects ONLY material relating to the history of Murray State University, leaving all other regional historical material as a function of Special Collections.

The following is a list of the types of materials needed by the Archives:

- yearbooks (1925-1963)
- catalogs (both graduate & undergraduate)
- campus telephone directories
- issues of the ALUMNI magazine
- newspaper clippings on any MSU topic
- photographs on any MSU topic
- printed programs (Campus Lights, Commencement, Senior Breakfast, Alumni Banquet, Honors Day, High School Day, concerts, etc.)
- departmental newsletters, publications and reports
- promotional and public relations materials
- faculty & alumni publications
- class schedule books
- Training School material

To be sure, the Archives already possesses many of these items, but second copies or copies in better condition are always needed. Many of the more than 30,000 MSU alumni are in possession of some of the above-mentioned types of memorabilia. The Archives is always most happy to receive items from alumni or former employees of the university.

Members of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society can be of immeasurable assistance in helping the Archives locate and retrieve items which may fill in gaps in the collection.

Any questions may be directed to:

Dr. Ernie R. Bailey
University Archives
Murray State University
Murray, KY 42071

(502) 762-4287